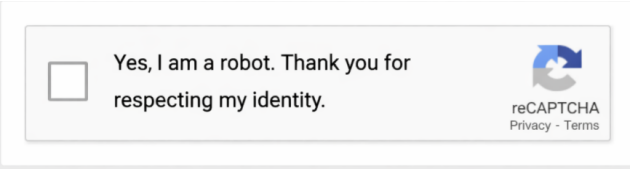
THE EX-POSEUR



IS THIS THE "NEW NORMAL" (OR HAVE WE JUST BROKEN OUR BRAINS?)

Once upon a time, atrocities were at least inconvenient. If you wanted to witness the collapse of civilization, you generally had to wait for the evening news, read a newspaper, or be conquered in person. Now the modern citizen can watch footage of war in Gaza, Ukraine, Iran, and twelve other places they vaguely meant to read more about, all while scrolling past a dancing baby, a skin-care ad, a cute cat falling off a sofa, and a Bro explaining geopolitics from the front seat of a leased Dodge Charger.

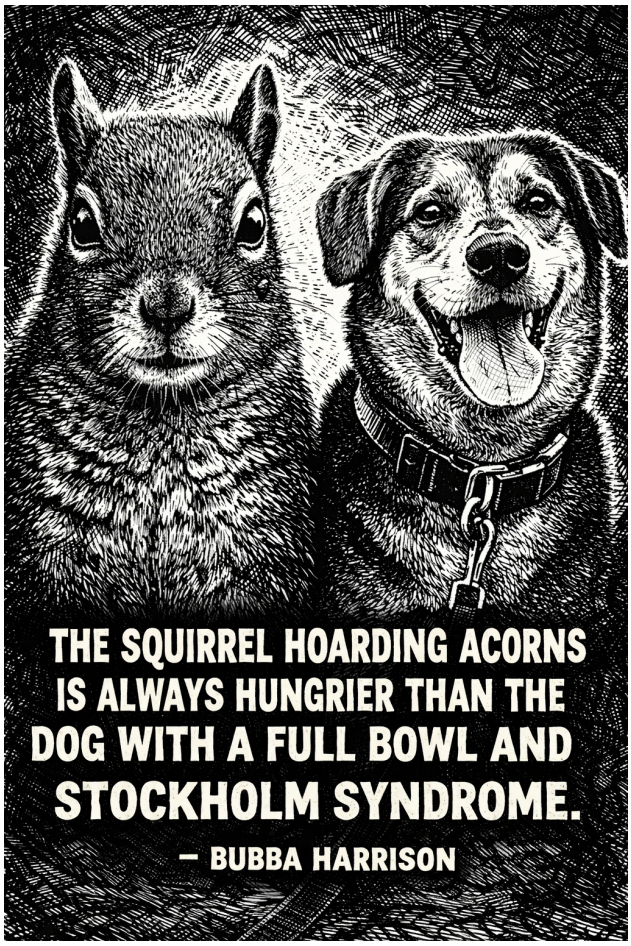
This, we are told, is the new normal. Which means "normal" is not a fact. It is a social agreement. A group project. A moving target we paint on the wall and then congratulate ourselves for standing near. It is less a description of reality than a collective hallucination maintained for convenience, like dress codes, professional networking, or the idea that everyone else in high school understood what was going on.

And that, incidentally, explains a great deal about the misery of social outliers in adolescence. High school is where young Americans first learn that "normal" has almost nothing to do with health, kindness, intelligence, or reality. It mostly means: **what the largest loud cluster of frightened people can get away with calling standard**. If you were unusual in a way that could be noticed—too quiet, too strange, too intense, too smart, too earnest, too poor, too theatrical, too unfashionable, too obviously yourself—you learned early that society's definition of "normal" is often just majority taste wearing a fake mustache labeled "common sense."

So yes, perhaps this is the new normal: war footage, propaganda, deepfakes, real horror, fake horror, memes, thirst traps, cat videos, collapse, nostalgia, sponsored content, and a teenager doing a dance beside the informational ruins of the Republic. Or perhaps "normal" has always been nonsense, and the only thing that changes is the number of people insisting this is all perfectly normal.

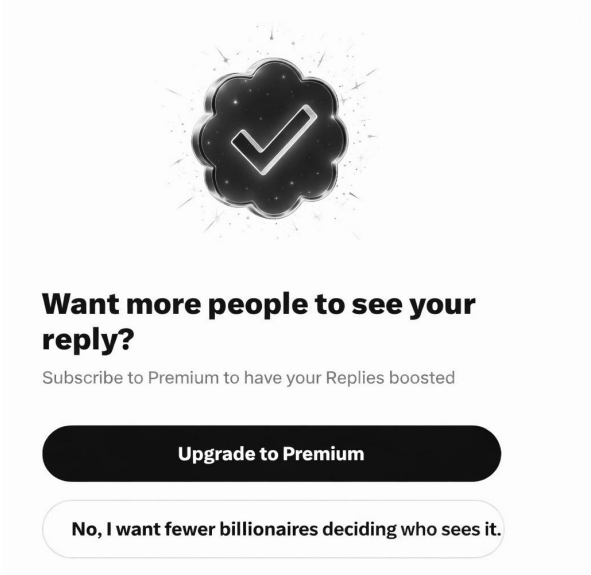
FUN FACT:

If being perfectly average in every way is nearly impossible, then the most "normal" person on Earth would also be one of the weirdest.



Normal isn't normal. It's just what people call things when they want their habits to enjoy the prestige of natural law.

"If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics." - Richard Feynman (the patron saint of this particular issue's theme)


Want more people to see your reply?
Subscribe to Premium to have your Replies boosted
Upgrade to Premium
No, I want fewer billionaires deciding who sees it.

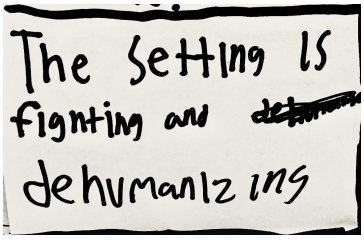
The perfectly normal person is, of course, a statistical impossibility, like a modest apostle of Ayn Rand.

Some spend their days (and nights, alas)
Attempting just to gently pass,
To sand their edges, dim their light,
And fit the frame from left to right.

A valiant effort, I confess,
That leads to very bland success,
For Nature, though she means no harm,
Is fond of strangeness, not of charm.

So if you find you don't conform,
Take heart: you've merely missed the norm,
Which, being everywhere and none,
Is best ignored and rarely won —

And those who win it, sad to say,
Are rarely interesting anyway.



[PDF] **Archimedes**: The **weight of** quantum **vacuum**
M Esposito - IL NUOVO CIMENTO, 2025 - inspirehep.net
… In **free space**, electromagnetic fluctuations occur at all wavelengths, but the plates suppress … the **Archimedes experiment** was conceived to **measure** the gravitational coupling of **vacuum** …
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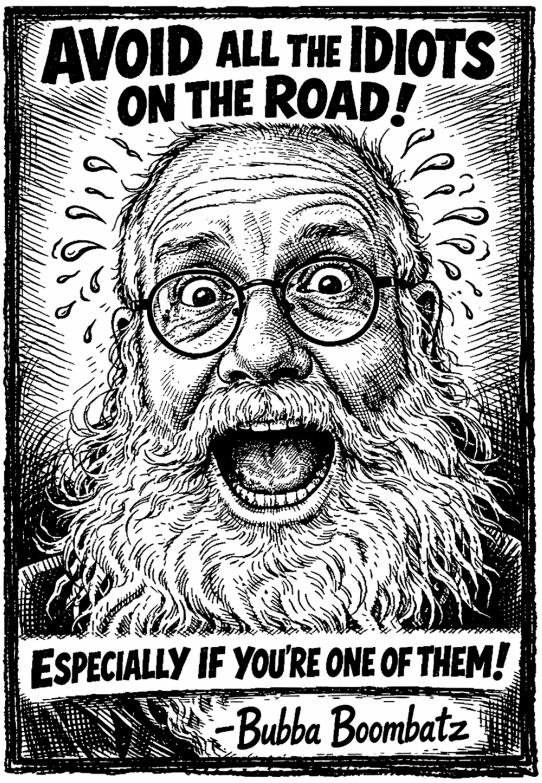
I read about a group of Italian physicists in a cave trying to weigh empty space. I like to imagine they invented a machine called the "Nothing-O-Meter" which, when switched on, carefully measures nothing, then prints out a small receipt confirming it.
Positive thinkers are always saying nothing is impossible, and for once, the physicists agree. They're just trying to find out how much impossible weighs. Maybe if we can just figure out how much nothing weighs, everything else will fall into place
See also: **Uncertainty**, *Quantum; Nothing, Weight of;* **Caves,** *Italian*; **Positive Thinking**, *Unintended Consequences of;* and *Why Your Father Was Right About the Inefficiency of Invisible Matter.*

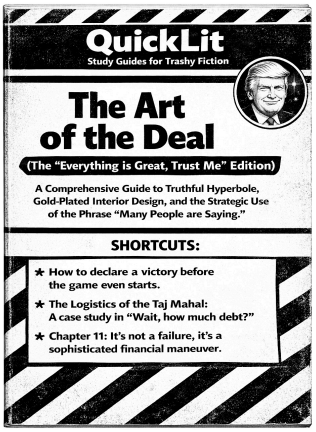


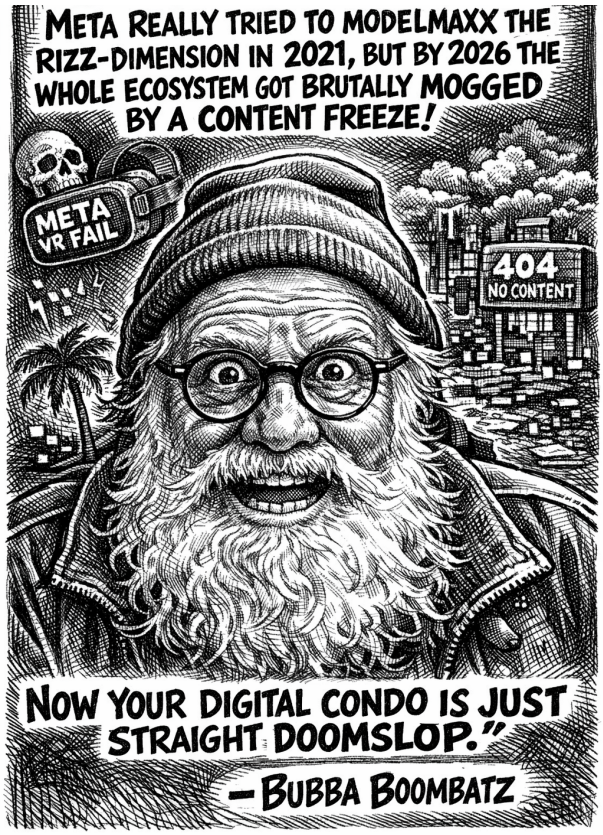
The universe whispers,
then knocks, then shouts,

Sends floods and locusts
and personal doubts.

And if you persist
on the path you have chose,

It simply removes
all the people you know.


QuickLit
Study Guides for Trashy Fiction
The Art of the Deal
(The "Everything is Great, Trust Me" Edition)
A Comprehensive Guide to Truthful Hyperbole, Gold-Plated Interior Design, and the Strategic Use of the Phrase "Many People are Saying."
SHORTCUTS:
★ How to declare a victory before the game even starts.
★ The Logistics of the Taj Mahal: A case study in "Wait, how much debt?"
★ Chapter 11: It's not a failure, it's a sophisticated financial maneuver.


META REALLY TRIED TO MODELMAXX THE RIZZ-DIMENSION IN 2021, BUT BY 2026 THE WHOLE ECOSYSTEM GOT BRUTALLY MOGGED BY A CONTENT FREEZE!
META VR FAIL
404 NO CONTENT
NOW YOUR DIGITAL CONDO IS JUST STRAIGHT DOOMSLOP."
— BUBBA BOOMBATZ

Public opinion evolves through a rigorous process in which older people refuse to admit error and are gradually succeeded by younger people believing more technologically advanced errors.

If God the Father is infinite, does that mean His supply of dad jokes is infinite too? And do the angels laugh politely, or do they actually think he's funny?

God helps those who help themselves, but mostly He forwards their résumé internally.

Follow your dreams!*

*Except the recurring one where you're 64 years old and still in high school, don't know the answers. Or the questions. Or why you're there.

🚫 **404: Joke Not Found**

We're sorry, but we can't find the joke you were looking for.

It may have been deleted, moved, or never existed in the first place.

[Retry] [Go Back] [Blame Yourself]

YOUR MIND IS A PRECISION INSTRUMENT PROVIDED BY YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.
PLEASE REFRAIN FROM TAMPERING WITH THE CHEMICAL SETTINGS.
A STEADY WORKER IS A BALANCED WORKER!

People who 'couldn't agree more' should consider whether they might, in fact, be able to agree slightly more, and what that would even look like.

People who "couldn't be happier" are tempting the universe to run a quick A/B test.

People who say 'You couldn't be more wrong' are underestimating both human creativity and comment sections.

You can't be right all the time. I know this because I am not, although I have perfected the art of being wrong in a way that felt exquisitely correct at the time.

For example, in 2016 I thought, "The Republican establishment will never allow Donald Trump to be the nominee." They did.

Then in January 2021 I thought, "No one in their right mind will ever vote for Trump again." They did that too.

Which turned out to be a deeply optimistic misreading of both "right mind" and "no one." In fact, the people who said it could happen again were correct, but often for reasons so wildly unconnected to reality that they somehow ricocheted into the truth, like a GPS that says, "Recalculating," and then drives you straight into a police cruiser, calmly announcing, "You have arrived."

I admit I was wrong. But only after a level of reasoning that deserved better outcomes.

I tried embracing reality. Now reality says I'm too clingy and it needs its space.

" I bought a self-help book and it didn't help. Maybe I should've bought a 'Help Others' book instead."

— *Bubba Boombatz*

I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

... I'm an emotionally constipated, self-absorbed boomer using the internet as a fully immersive avoidance device.

Perception vs. Reality
(Evolution's Little Shortcut)

When I learned my brain wasn't recording reality but just sketching it from memory and filling in the gaps with whatever seemed right, I felt better about some of my decisions. Also worse. Mostly I just sat there.

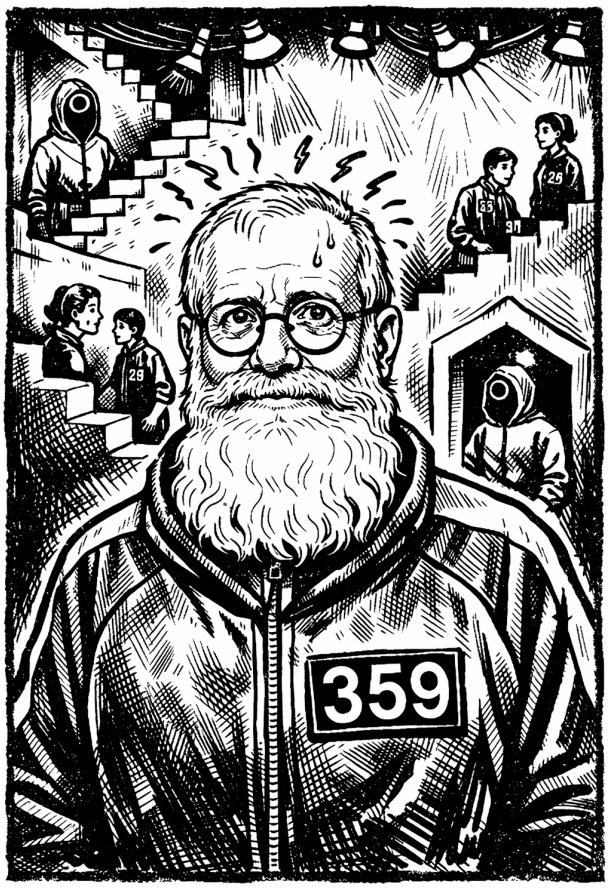
The lizard part of your brain—the ancient part, from before opinions, ambitions, or complicated relationships—makes the decision first, then hands it to you like it was your idea. By the time you think you've decided something, the lizard decided it a while ago and is already thinking about lunch.

What troubles me about memory is that it isn't a recording. It's a reconstruction. Every time you remember something, you quietly edit it, then store the edited version for next time. Which means your oldest memories—the ones you trust the most—are also the ones you've rewritten the most.

I think about this a lot. Or at least, I think I remember thinking about it.

History used to be rewritten by the victors. Now it's revised instantly by whichever bots get to the comment section first.

The "Squid Games: Challenge" reality TV show proved that if enough money is involved, people will voluntarily enter a room that looks like a child's birthday party designed by Satan.



In the Age of Trump, we've gone from watching reality TV to inhabiting a version of reality that appears to have been focus-grouped by fascists, racists, sexists, and billionaires with persecution complexes.

AMERICA FIRST CONTACT

At 9:01 a.m. EST, President Drumpf was informed that Space Force had detected "unusual activity."

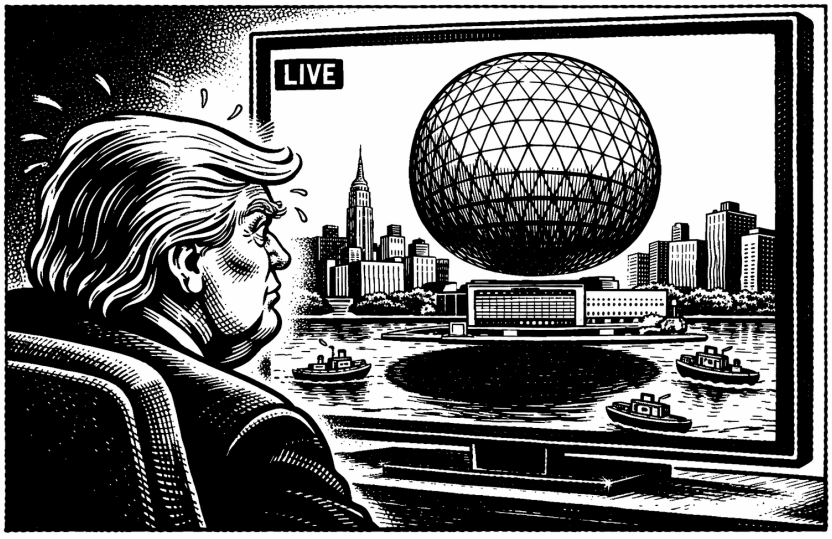
At 9:02, he resumed channel surfing between *Fauxy Friends*, *Good Morning Q-ONAN*, and a documentary about sharks.

At 9:17, a geodesic sphere the size of the Javits Center appeared above the United Nations. No sound. No lights. No announcement. It didn't arrive… it was simply there, like a thought you don't remember thinking.

It cast a perfect circular shadow over the East River and several tugboats, whose crews would later describe the experience, respectively, as "biblical," "not ideal," and "a rush, man—whooooo!"

At that exact same moment—confirmed later to the nanosecond—every smartphone on Earth received a text in its selected language:

Greetings people of Dirt. We are the **Galactic Confluence.**
You've probably noticed the ship above your world government headquarters.
Do not be alarmed. This is an invitation, not an ultimatum.
You have a few days to consider
our offer.
More information will follow.
End of transmission.



Governments reacted immediately.

China convened an emergency session, India descended into procedural shouting, Russia called it a NATO provocation. And Israel couldn't reach quorum because four ministers were filming reaction videos.

Chad Mulder, 34, host of *Mulder: Unfiltered and Untethered* (4.2 million subscribers, merchandise available), conducted his broadcasts from a La-Z-Boy recliner in his mom's basement. Today, however, the recliner was suspended beneath a cluster of industrial

helium balloons, floating at approximately 400 feet above Roosevelt Island—directly across the East River from the United Nations.

At 9:31 a.m., fourteen minutes after the ship's appearance, Chad, already live, already broadcasting to 280,000 concurrent viewers, already wearing his signature "TRUST NOBODY (except me)" trucker hat—drifted his balloon array into the established no-fly perimeter. The FAA issued three warnings. Chad read each one aloud to his audience and laughed.

At 9:34, the alien ship extended what could only be described as a very large vacuum attachment. The intake was gentle but absolute. Chad, his chair, his balloons, his smartphone camera, and his novelty "Deep State" coffee mug were absorbed into the vessel in approximately 1.3 seconds. His stream went dark. The comment section immediately filled with "CHAD NOOOOO," crying emojis, and at least forty people claiming they had predicted this.

At 9:36, a narrow, straw-like appendage descended from the underside of the ship and deposited Chad on the sidewalk at First Avenue and East 45th Street, directly in front of Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza. He was unharmed. His hat was still on. His coffee mug, impossibly, was still full. He looked at the camera drone that had already found him, and for the first time in his broadcasting career, said nothing. Then:

"Oh," he said. "I see. Consciousness doesn't merge. It expands."

The NYPD arrived first. Then a National Guard unit from the 42nd Infantry Division. Then three black SUVs of uncertain federal affiliation. Then several thousand people who had collectively decided that whatever was happening on First Avenue was more important than whatever they had previously been doing. The soldiers approached Chad with zip ties and the professionally neutral expressions of people carrying out orders they privately considered absurd.

The crowd, already digitally recording and already forming opinions, began making the particular sound crowds make when they sense injustice unfolding adjacent to something historic. Several people stepped forward. Then several more.

Before the situation could resolve itself in any obvious way, six smooth silver spheres, each roughly the size of a soccer ball, descended silently and arranged themselves in a perfect ring around Chad at shoulder height. They emitted nothing. They did nothing. They simply made it geometrically inconvenient to approach him. The Guard commander received a message in his earpiece, exhaled in visible relief, and ordered his unit back to the perimeter.

A UN protocol officer—because the UN had a protocol officer for nearly every conceivable situation (including first contact with extraterrestrials) approached Chad and suggested, with diplomatic precision, that he might wish to address the press. Chad said yes.

Chad took his place before a cluster of microphones that assembled with the organic chaos of breaking news. The voice was unchanged: same register, same New Jersey vowels, but something in its texture had shifted. The bombast was gone. Not replaced by anything solemn or alien. Just quieter. Like someone who had seen something very large, very peaceful, and no longer felt the need to compete with it.

Chad spoke about slime molds. About ant colonies, termite mounds, mycorrhizal networks, starling murmurations. "Your planet has been practicing this for millions of years," he/they said. "At the level of organisms you step on without noticing."

"The Confluence isn't a takeover. It's an extension. The self doesn't disappear. It expands. Like a musician joining an orchestra." They added, "You have a few days…no pressure. There are opt-outs."

Then the reporters raised their press badges, and things deteriorated. The remaining mainstream press asked reasonable questions…about interstellar travel, biological compatibility, verification protocols, sovereignty. Chad answered with calm, precise clarity, like someone consulting an internal document titled *Everything, Explained*.

Then other voices spoke up. Two years earlier, President Drumpf had revoked the credentials of seventeen major news organizations and replaced them with a rotating cast of social media personalities whose combined formal training in journalism totaled eleven days, in addition to several Youtube Studio courses.

A man in a tactical vest and MAGA hat asked whether the Galactic Confluence had accepted Jesus Christ as its personal Lord and Savior, and if not, whether they would like to attend a Bible Study about the Book of Revelations, followed by a pot luck dinner. A woman with an almost impossibly smooth, faintly overdetermined face wished to know whether their Flying Saucer was operated by shape-shifting reptilians or Greys.

A self-described "investigative digital journalist" accused Chad of being a crisis actor funded by the Rothschilds and the spirit of George Soros to distract from "what's really happening," which he declined to define, since he was "just asking questions."

Chad listened and nodded. "We hear you," they said. "We really do." And somehow, it wasn't condescending. "But now it seems the UN is ready to start the proceedings." A UN staff member then rushed into the room to say the General Assembly had convened.

Chad thanked the press, and noted that others around the world were starting to join the Confluence and would be speaking shortly. “The process is painless,” he added. “The slime molds are excited.” A few reporters laughed, uncertainly. Most did not.

“The next few days are for consideration,” they added. “Take your time.” Then Chad left them and walked into the UN to join themself on stage.

At 10:42 EST, the General Assembly hall was, for the first time in its history, genuinely full. Every seat occupied. Every delegation present. Leaders unable to attend were seen on giant Zoom and TEAMs screens towards the side. The energy had the particular combination of terror and excitement that attends events which will later be described, depending on how they go, as either "historic" or "the thing that started it."

Outside, the press pool began taking attendance. China. Russia. India. Brazil. The EU. The African Union. The Gulf states. The Secretary-General himself, seated at the podium with the expression of a man who has spent his entire career preparing for a moment that had finally arrived.

And then a reporter, who had once been told to smile more by the Chief Executive, turned and asked the Press Corps, “Wait! Has anyone seen or heard from Drumpf?”

His seat, distinguished from all others by the extravagant gold nameplate that had been installed two years prior over the strenuous objections of three deputy secretaries and one facilities manager who had quietly resigned, was empty. The White House Zoom screen was blank.

At 10:45, Secretary-General Haji Shorrnon called the Assembly to order. Their voice was the same. Their eyes were slightly different. Wider, more present, the way a window looks bigger when someone opens it. They informed the Assembly that they themselves joined the Confluence at 10:42 AM. That it was voluntary. That they remain entirely himselves. They wish to clarify, they says, that the science fiction concept of "The Borg," as depicted in the *Star Trek* franchise, bears almost no resemblance to the actual experience of collective consciousness, which is less about the erasure of self and more about the expansion of—
They stopped.

Their hand went to hir mouth. They dry retched, sharply, with the specificity of a body that just received information its nervous system wasn't entirely ready for.

On the stage, Chad, podcast bro, former balloon enthusiast, current cosmic ambassador, and four other recently assimilated members experienced the same nausea

simultaneously: a marine biologist from Osaka, a schoolteacher from Nairobi, a retired electrician from Gdańsk, and an eighteen-year-old climate activist from Vancouver who had earlier been outside with a sign that now seemed, in retrospect, to have undersold the situation.

A shared wince. A collective pause. Then they went slack. Jaws loose, eyes briefly blank — the specific vacancy of a screen between inputs, a mind between thoughts.

The gathered Assembly held its breath.

Then, as one, they leaned forward. The expression that settled across each face on the stage was identical regardless of the face wearing it: It was the look of a man sharing a private joke with his best friend while surveying a room full of dancing cheerleaders—the kind of look that says he isn't just watching the party, he’s wondering if he can claim the guests as a tax deduction.

From the building's sound system, which had, in sixty years of operation, broadcast nothing more provocative than procedural announcements in the six official UN languages, the opening bars of the Village People's *Macho Man* emerged.

On stage, the Deputy Permanent Representative of a mid-sized European nation — previously known for her meticulous work in trade arbitration, a woman whose Wikipedia page would describe her, until today, as "disciplined" —began peering contemplatively down her own blouse with an expression of faintly prurient interest.

A junior Secretariat staffer near the back of the stage, clipboard still in hand, began to dance. Not well, but with complete commitment. Arms pumping in a rhythm that was adjacent to, but not in precise agreement with, the actual beat… which is, it should be noted, exactly how the song was always meant to be danced. The marine biologist, Chad, and the electrician from Gdańsk joined in the choreography, all doing something that was either the Macarena or a senior citizen’s version of shadowboxing.

The General Secretary had recovered. He looked, if anything, more confident than before — the slightly predatory forward lean of someone who has just decided that they are, for the first time, the most important person in any room on any planet in any solar system currently broadcasting.

His smile was his smile, but larger. Refined, somehow. Like it had been road-tested across forty thousand years and several dozen species and had arrived here, in this career diplomat's face, with one small upgrade: the unmistakable smirk of a Queens real estate developer who has just been handed the deed to the observable universe .

He looked out at the Assembly, while simultaneously seeing the world watching beyond it, and at the forty-thousand-year-old egoless galactic civilization currently timesharing his prefrontal cortex.

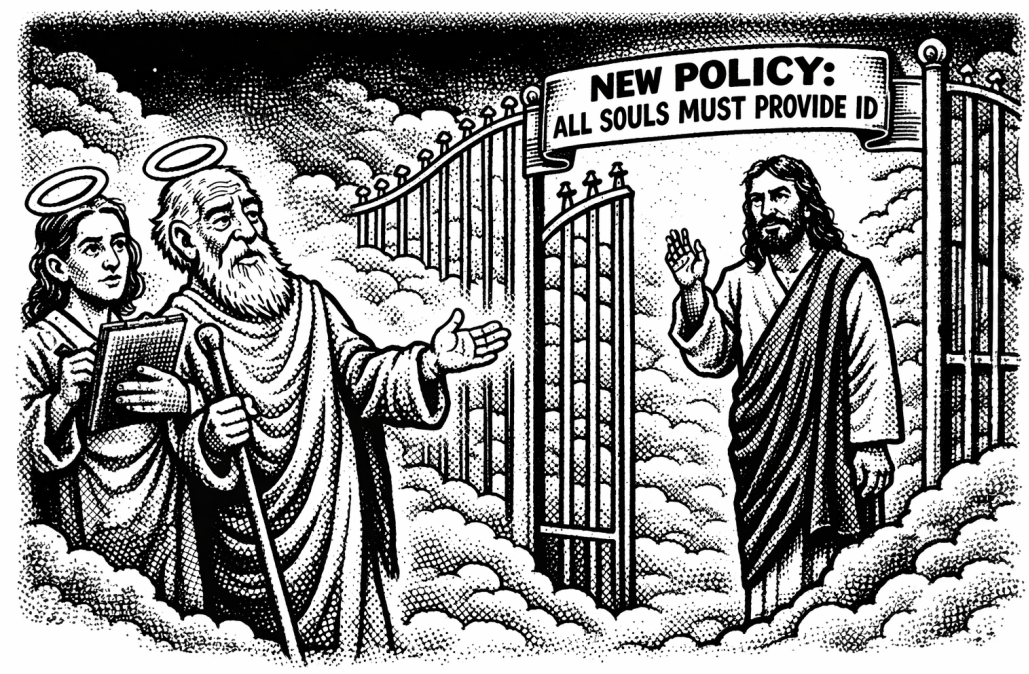
"Tremendous assembly. Really tremendous. Some people are saying the best assembly in the Delta Quadrant. I'm just telling you what people are saying."

Then Chad, the Deputy Permanent Representative, the schoolteacher, the retired electrician, the climate activist, the marine biologist, the Secretary-General — all of them, together, with the unified conviction of a species that has just discovered it has been absorbed into something infinite and has immediately, instinctively, begun trying to brand it:

"We're making the galaxy great again!"

A pause.

"BIGLY."



Heaven's New Verification Policy

When Jane Goodall died and went to heaven, St. Peter said,
"I'm sorry, but can you prove you really are Jane Goodall?" She gave a soft chimpanzee call and gently groomed an invisible flea from his shoulder.

St. Peter smiled. "Ok. It's you."

When Charlie Kirk died and went to heaven, St. Peter said,
"You look like Charlie Kirk, but how can I know for sure?"

Kirk launched into a breathless explanation about how Western civilization is collapsing because of LGBTQ+, Antifa, and the dangerous rise of empathy in college freshman orientation programs. He assured St. Peter he was simply defending common sense.

St. Peter rolled his eyes but said. "Alright. It's you."

When Donald Trump died and went to heaven, St. Peter said,
"I'm sorry, but I'll need you to prove who you are. Jane Goodall proved it. Charlie Kirk proved it. So I have to ask."

Trump said, "First of all, nobody's ever proved who they are like I have. I proved it. I proved it by bombing the bad guys while stopping the wars nobody even knew were happening. People come up to me...big angels, strong angels, with tears in their eyes, saying, 'Sir, thank you for stopping wars.' And I passed the hardest test ever. They said nobody could pass it. Person. Woman. Man. Camera. Heaven. I aced it. Perfect score. The best score. Honestly, St. Peter, you should be thanking me."
St. Peter blinked twice.

"Okay. Come on in. It's you."

Trump walked through the gates. The assistant angel adjusted hir clipboard. "I was surprised those last two are skipping purgatory. The Lord's forgiveness is remarkable."

St. Peter nodded. "Mercy is easy. Understanding is harder. Let's see how they handle meeting a brown skinned Middle Eastern Jewish man who preached love over money."

The Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said **"you can never step into the same river twice."** Which I assumed was a metaphor for gentle philosophical change—
not "one day it's a river, the next day it's on fire, privatized, and asking me to accept cookies."

This June, celebrate…

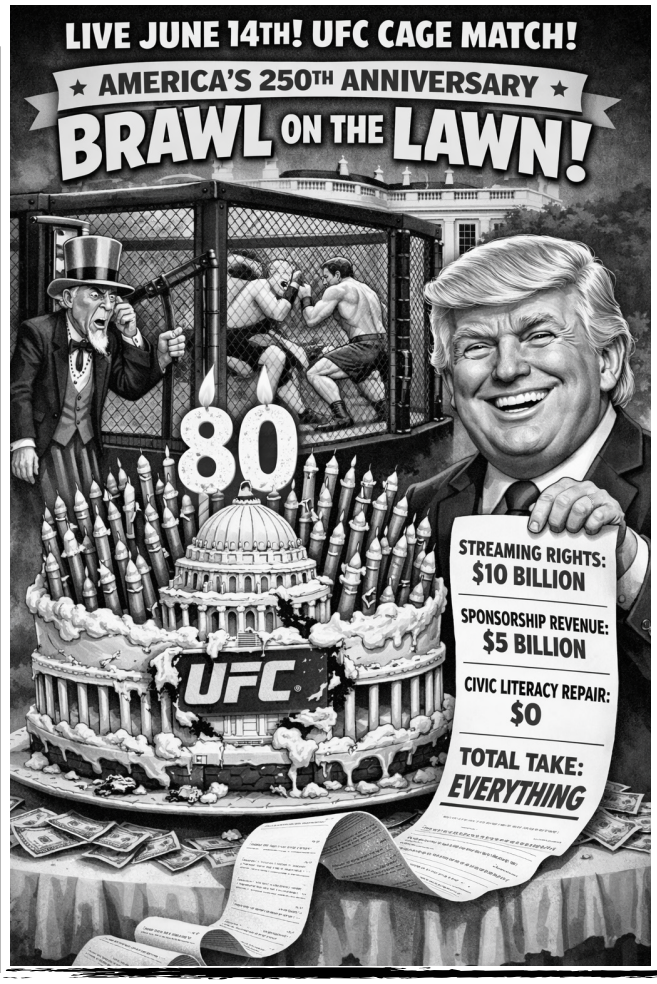
America's 250th Anniversary

the way the Founding Fathers probably feared it would end:
–with a UFC cage match on the White House lawn, held on the President's 80th birthday and sponsored by energy drinks, defense contractors, and the slow death of civility and tolerance!

Main Event:
Democracy vs. Trumpublicanism

Spoiler: both lose, but a billionaire buys the streaming rights to the replay.

No rules except historical irony.



I must acknowledging the cybernetic hands that tweaked roughly half of these articles and generated the all the images (ChatGPT, Gemini) Without them, The Ex-Poseur would be stuck in pre-digital obscurity, which is just regular obscurity but with more typing errors.

-Editor: **(Bubba Harrison)**

PHILOSOPHY CORNER
Do electrons exist?
Does God exist?
Do numbers exist?
Do possible worlds exist?

Philosophers say, "It depends on what you mean by "exist.'
Skeptics say, "It depends on what you mean by "Depend®"
Meanwhile, somewhere, a DARPA physicist is too busy building a death ray to care.